

NO PLAN B IN IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker and my esteemed colleagues, one of the most grievous blunders in the whole Iraq debacle was the total failure to figure out what we would do after toppling Saddam Hussein. The architects of this war thought that was the whole task. Mission accomplished.

There was no plan for how to manage the aftermath. No plan for keeping the peace in a country with deep sectarian divisions, no plan for how to institute democracy in a society with no democratic infrastructure or institutions. Well, now we see history repeating itself, because The Washington Post reported yesterday that the Bush administration and top military commanders apparently have no idea what the next step is if the troop escalation plan fails, which General Petraeus himself believes probably will.

The Post reports that the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Peter Pace, told a meeting of the Nation's Governors: "I'm a Marine, and Marines don't talk about failure. They talk about victory."

Well, confidence is one thing. Single mindedness is another, and, frankly, if the Bush national security team had a better track record of smart decisions and strategic successes, I might be willing to give them the benefit of the doubt. But as it turns out, these folks have been wrong, very wrong, throughout most of this occupation.

Indeed, when President Bush announced the so-called surge nearly 2 months ago, he essentially conceded that mistakes had been made and not everything his administration has done in Iraq has gone by design.

But as yesterday's Post article points out, we are way beyond plan B. This is more like plan D. There have been many times that we have been told the necessary adjustments are being made to achieve victory, whatever that means, in the context of Iraq.

But here we are, 4 years into this war, still spinning our wheels and nearly 3,200 Americans dead, and the ones who come home in one piece sent to military hospitals that are in deplorable conditions, often delivering substandard care. How many more chances does the Bush administration get to make things right in Iraq? I say: none. There is only one solution: bring our troops home in short order as soon as logistically and safely as possible.

□ 1700

In a way, actually, all the discussion about whether plan A, B, C, D, is, at best, something of a distraction is like arguing about what was the worst part of a root canal. The fact is, the whole Iraq enterprise was fundamentally flawed from the beginning and never should have been launched in the first place. There is not much we can do now

to reverse the unforgivable mistake of this Iraq occupation and the unspeakable damages done, but we can do something to ensure it doesn't last a minute longer. We can here in the United States Congress use our Constitutional powers to ensure that not one more family has to lose a son or daughter, a husband or wife, a mother or father for someone else's ideological mess.

It is time, Mr. Speaker. It is time for this tragic chapter in American history to finally end. It is time to bring our troops home.

U.S. BORDER PATROL AGENTS
RAMOS AND COMPEAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HOLT). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, today is the 49th day since two U.S. Border Patrol Agents entered Federal prison. Agents Ramos and Compean were convicted last spring for shooting a Mexican drug smuggler who brought 743 pounds of marijuana across our borders into Texas.

These agents never should have been sent to prison. There are legitimate legal questions about how this prosecution was initiated and how the prosecutor's office proceeded in this case.

To prosecute the agents, the U.S. Attorney's Office granted immunity to the known drug smuggler. Homeland Security officials promised Members of Congress information about this case, then they could not provide the information. Recently, reports indicated that the prosecutors in this case may have withheld crucial evidence from the defense. Mr. Speaker, I am going to repeat that. Recently, reports indicated that the prosecutors in this case may have withheld crucial evidence from the defense.

Drug Enforcement Agency reports have revealed that the Mexican drug smuggler brought a second load of marijuana, 752 pounds, into the United States. In fact, Mr. Speaker, this drug smuggler is not an American citizen, and he is suing the Border Patrol for \$5 million. But, Mr. Speaker, the information I just mentioned, this information was kept from the jury and the public.

Mr. Speaker, I have sent a letter to House Judiciary Chairman JOHN CONYERS asking for hearings on this case and, Mr. Speaker, other Members have made the same request of the chairman. And knowing the chairman to be a fair-minded person, I hope that he will hold hearings on this prosecutor in west Texas and how he looked into this case and brought this case to the jury, because, again, these Border Agents are heroes. They are not convicts; they are heroes.

Over the past 6 months, dozens of Members of Congress have asked the President to pardon these agents. I myself have sent five letters to the Presi-

dent asking that he pardon these two agents. They are heroes of this country. They should not be in Federal prison.

Mr. President, we are calling on you to listen to the American people and to the thousands of citizens who have petitioned you to pardon these men. It is time for justice to prevail over an injustice.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

WAR IN IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, in a few short days the Congress of the United States will have an opportunity to end the war in Iraq if it so pleases, or we will vote to approve the supplemental and give the President of the United States the money that he is asking for to continue the war possibly through the end of his term.

In the next 5 minutes, I would like to discuss the implications of Congress's action and a plan that would enable us to take a new direction in Iraq, to bring our troops home, to stabilize Iraq, to close our bases, to end the occupation, and to end the war.

Last week, I submitted to this Congress such a plan embodied in H.R. 1234. H.R. 1234 is a plan to end the war, and it contains a number of elements which were arrived at with the help of people who have long experience at the U.N. in peacekeeping missions and security missions, experts in international relations, and military experts.

Two days ago, the administration said that it has no plan B for Iraq. As a matter of fact, a senior general said, "Plan B is plan A," which means that the administration is committed to a course of action which would keep our troops in Iraq through the end of its term. That is simply not acceptable.

In November, the American people voted for a new direction. In November, the American people changed the leadership of the Congress, voted to turn both the House and the Senate from Republican control to Democratic control, and I submit the issue was the war.

All across this country there is a great concern about the rising number of casualties; about that even when our troops serve and they come home after being injured, they are not being cared for; about the costs of the war, how we are seeing our budgets for housing and health care, for education, for seniors services, and, indeed, for veterans affairs reduced.

America is losing not only the lives of our soldiers, not only are we going into a great financial debt borrowing money from Beijing to fight a war in Baghdad, but we are losing our moral position in the world, continuing to prosecute a war that is simply based on lies. Let's face it, every assertion made that took us into Iraq has been ripped away as being a lie.

So what are we to do? H.R. 1234 does the following: It is predicated on Congress taking action to end the war, stop the funding. At that point, the administration will go to the world community and say, "Look, the money is no longer here for the war. We are going to close our bases, we are going to end the occupation, we are going to bring our troops home." Only by asserting that we will end the occupation will we be in a position to be able to get help from the world community, which really doesn't want anything to do with this war absent the United States taking a new direction.

The insurgency is fueled by the occupation. It is well understood. So we end the occupation. But then that is not enough. We need the international community to help us build a peacekeeping and security force that would move in as our troops move out.

The elements of the plan embodied in H.R. 1234 are the following: Not only do we end the occupation and bring our troops home and get the international community involved, but we also create the context for a program of reconciliation between the Shiites, the Sunnis, and the Kurds. Right now there is no movement towards reconciliation, because with the U.S. occupying, the Shiites don't have any incentive at all to do that. We need to move out so that we can set in place a program of reconciliation and a program of honest reconstruction. No more theft from the American taxpayers or the Iraqi people by these contractors whose performance has been absolutely abominable, who have stolen billions of dollars. Give the Iraqi people a chance to have their own reconstruction program, with the jobs going to the people of Iraq so they can feed their families. In an economy with 50 percent of the people unemployed, we need to take a new approach and end the reconstruction program as it exists and start a new one.

In future presentations to this Congress, I intend to lay out the rest of H.R. 1234, which is the plan to end the war, bring our troops home, stabilize Iraq, and take a new chapter in America's relationship with the world.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. HULSHOF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. HULSHOF addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE GLOBAL NATURE OF OUR ECONOMY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. DREIER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, as we clearly saw last week with the sharp decline in our stock market following a major drop in the Chinese market, the increasingly global nature of our economy is one of the most defining issues of our time. The growing connectedness of the world's consumers, producers, workers, and investors is having an impact on virtually every aspect of our lives. And with all the rapid change that globalization is bringing about, it is very natural for us to ask ourselves the question: Have these changes been for the better? We want to know if globalization is improving our lives or making them worse.

Mr. Speaker, one of the biggest concerns that we have when we look at this question is the issue of income inequality, something that many people are talking about. We read reports of massive executive salaries, and compare them to the circumstances of America's middle class and the concerns that working families have, and we inevitably wonder if the system is in fact fair. I recently spoke here on this issue, on this very question.

The critical issue is not, Mr. Speaker, whether those at the top are becoming more prosperous; the critical issue is whether everyone is becoming more prosperous, particularly those who are at the bottom of the economic ladder.

We looked at the issue of wages and saw that they are growing for all workers. But when we looked even deeper, we saw that the outlook is even more positive. The purchasing power of working families is increased by lower taxes and greater access to low-cost goods through international trade. This growing purchasing power, along with rising wages, is increasing the standard of living for all Americans, with the greatest positive impact for those who are just beginning to move up the economic ladder.

Today, I want to look at another issue that helps to answer the question of whether quality of life is improving for everyone; that is, the issue of jobs, Mr. Speaker. More specifically, new job creation, and the quality of those new jobs.

Jobs are perhaps the most critical issue in determining standards of living. Does everyone who wants a job have a job? Does that job provide the opportunity to prosper and improve one's quality of life? Just as we saw with wages, the numbers demonstrate a very positive outlook for workers. Unemployment is at 4.6 percent, a rate that is exceptionally low. Mr. Speaker, in fact, we have had 16 straight months of unemployment at 5 percent or less. At the same time, the workforce has been rapidly expanding. Our economy has created nearly 7½ million new jobs in the last 3½ years. There are 146 mil-

lion Americans working today, more than at any time in our Nation's history. The jobs outlook in the United States continues to be very, very good.

But just like with wages, we see an even fuller picture, a better picture when we dig just a little deeper. Average monthly hires last year were nearly 5 million, the highest rate ever since data have been collected. Of those 5 million, the share of workers who left their old job voluntarily for new work was also at the highest level. 58.3 percent made that move. This means that workers are not just finding jobs, they are finding better jobs, better opportunities. Anyone who has been stuck in a dead-end job knows that this is a huge quality of life issue.

Having a job is essential to providing for a family, and any job can serve as a starting point to success. But having a good job that offers new opportunities to prosper is essential to a growing standard of living.

The fact that we are seeing 5 million new hires every month demonstrates a great deal of churn and dynamism in our workforce, and we know that that change is not always easy.

But the rapidly growing number of workers who are voluntarily leaving their old jobs demonstrates that new and better opportunities are being created. It demonstrates, Mr. Speaker, the increased confidence in our workforce that comes with growing prosperity and the prospect of a better life. And it also helps to answer the question of whether the standard of living is improving for everyone, not just those who are at the top of the economic ladder.

□ 1715

New jobs and new opportunities are helping to make all of us more prosperous.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to continue to pursue pro-growth economic policies, including an embrace of America's global leadership role. Those policies have brought about this dynamic workforce, where everyone is upwardly mobile.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HOLT). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

BALLAD OF THE ALAMO

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. POE.

In the southern part of Texas
In the town of San Antonio
There's a fortress all in ruins
That the weeds have overgrown.